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PILLARS
LEGACY PLANNING LLP

Pets Are Family: Have You Planned for Them?

The Hardest Question Was: Who Would Take the Dog?

When people think about future planning, they often think about finances, paperwork, or legal documents. **But for many families, one of the most emotional questions is much simpler:**

"What happens to the pets?"

For one family, that question came unexpectedly after a sudden hospital stay. Between phone calls, appointments, and trying to support one another, another worry quietly sat in the background, the family dog waiting at home.

Everyone loved him. Everyone wanted to help. But no one had ever discussed who would take over his care if something serious happened.

- Who knew his routine?
- What food did he eat?
- Which vet was he registered with?
- Does he need medication?
- Would he cope with children, other pets, or a new environment?

What initially felt like a small practical concern quickly became emotional. The dog was not "**just a pet.**" He was part of the family, tied to memories, comfort, routine, and home itself.

Situations like this are more common than many people realise. Around 62% of UK households own at least one pet.

Pets are woven into everyday life. They provide companionship, comfort, and stability, especially during difficult periods. Yet many people never formally discuss what should happen to them during emergencies, illness, or major life changes. **Planning ahead does not need to be complicated.**

Simple conversations with trusted family or friends can make a significant difference and **can help loved ones step in more easily if needed.** Future planning is not only about protecting assets or organising paperwork. Sometimes, it is about protecting the small daily parts of life that matter most to us.

Because for many people, caring for family also means caring for the furry friends who depend on us too, with an estimated 36 million pets living in UK households, it reflects just how deeply animals are woven into family life across the country.

Pets, Planning, & Peace of Mind

Across the UK, pets are and always have been an increasingly important part of family life.

Dogs remain the most common companion, with around 15.5 million dogs living in UK homes, while there are an estimated 13 million cats across the country.

For many people, these animals are far more than pets. They are routine, comfort, companionship, and **family.**

Yet despite this, many households have never discussed what would happen to their pets during an emergency, illness, or unexpected life change.

A Few Simple Things to Consider

- Who would temporarily or permanently care for your pet if needed?
- Does someone know your pet's routine, vet details, or medical needs?
- Are feeding instructions or medications written down anywhere?
- Could someone easily access emergency supplies or contact information?

Small preparations can make a difficult situation significantly less stressful for both loved ones and animals.

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Why It Matters

Animal charities across the UK continue to report rising pressures on rescue services and pet support organisations, particularly during periods of financial or personal hardship.

Planning ahead does not need to be formal or complicated. Often, simple conversations and clear instructions can help keep your furry friends comfortable and out of the animal shelters.

Because future planning is not only about finances or paperwork it is also about protecting the everyday lives and companions that matter most to us.

Planning for the Pets Who Depend on You

At Pillars, we encourage people to think practically about what would happen to their pets if circumstances suddenly changed.

While pets cannot directly inherit money or assets under UK law, they can still be thoughtfully included within future planning.

Owners may choose to:

- Include wishes for pet care within their will
- Appoint a trusted person to take responsibility for their pet
- Leave funds intended to support ongoing care costs
- Discuss temporary and long-term care arrangements with family or friends and have written documentation of plans
- Create written guidance covering routines, medication, dietary needs, and veterinary information

In some situations, trusts may also be used to help provide financial support for a pet's care after an owner's death, depending on individual circumstances and legal advice.

Simple preparation like some be listed above can help avoid uncertainty and reduce stress for loved ones who may already be navigating difficult circumstances.

At Pillars, we believe **future planning should reflect real life,** including the people, routines, and companions that matter most to you.